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Returning auxiliary veterans: some methodological considerations

Ton Derks and Nico Roymans

When, after the Marian reforms of the early 1st c. B.C., Augustus took the final decision to turn the Roman field army into a fully professional and standing army, it had dramatic consequences for the lives of individual soldiers. Ordinary soldiers no longer left home for just one campaign but, depending on the unit they were serving in, stayed away for at least 25 years. Though recruiting grounds for the Roman legions and the *auxilia* differed from each other and over time, generally soldiers were posted in garrisons far away from their home country.¹ An intriguing question is what happened to these men after they had been discharged from the army: did they return to the home country they had not seen for so long, or did they prefer to settle in the area where they spent the best of their lives?

The above questions on recruitment and veteran settlement patterns are not new; they have already attracted scholarly attention. Central to most of that work is the almost exclusive reliance on epigraphical evidence. Starting from a systematic survey of mostly funeral and votive inscriptions erected for or by legionary veterans, J. C. Mann established that, despite Early Imperial efforts to settle veterans in colonies in Italy and elsewhere, “the men themselves most frequently preferred to remain in the areas in which they had served”.² While for the *auxilia* similarly comprehensive studies of the stone inscriptions have not been carried out, the ever-growing data-set of military diplomas has been regularly exploited for the question of settlement preferences among auxiliary veterans. By comparing the findspot of a diploma with the province where, according to the certificate’s text, the recipient had concluded his term of service, scholars conclude that about 80% of the auxiliary veterans had stayed in the province of their last garrison, while 10% had settled in a neighbouring province, and another 10% in provinces far away from their last post — presumably their home country.³

Those figures, based on the documentary evidence, for settlement preferences among discharged auxiliaries should, however, be read with caution. First, they represent an overall average calculated on the basis of *all* extant diplomas from the whole empire insofar as diplomas have been preserved in a sufficiently complete state to be included. Regional differences, which may well have been significant, do not show up in such calculations. If we examine the evidence for just one province, the returning figures diverge from the calculated average: for the army of Mauretania Tingitana, 10 military diplomas have now been recorded from findspots, notably on the Lower Danube, far outside the province of military service.⁴ If the model would apply here, we would expect some 80 diplomas in Mauretania Tingitana, while in reality only 16 have been recorded.⁵ The comparatively high numbers that have come to light recently in Thracia and Lower Moesia seem to indicate that auxiliary soldiers recruited from the Lower Danube did not only return home more frequently than we have been assuming, but more frequently than soldiers levied from many other parts of the empire.

1 With increasing local recruitment in the area of the garrison from the end of the 1st c. A.D. onwards, this begins to change only gradually.

2 Mann 1983, 56 ff, esp. 61.

3 Raepsaet-Charlier 1978; Roxan 1997; Pferdehirt 2002.

4 Cf. Derks in press, Table 2.

5 Data on Mauretanian diplomas after Pferdehirt 2002, 241 ff., updated with two new finds from Thamusia (see E. Papi, *ZPE* 142 [2003] 257-66 and 146 [2004] 255-58). Explaining away the statistical differences by arguing that metal detectorists in N Africa are not nearly as common as they are today in Eastern Europe seems beyond the point. One could say that samples for individual provinces are still too small for such statistical analyses (Haynes 2001, 74), but, alas, this is the only kind of information we presently have.

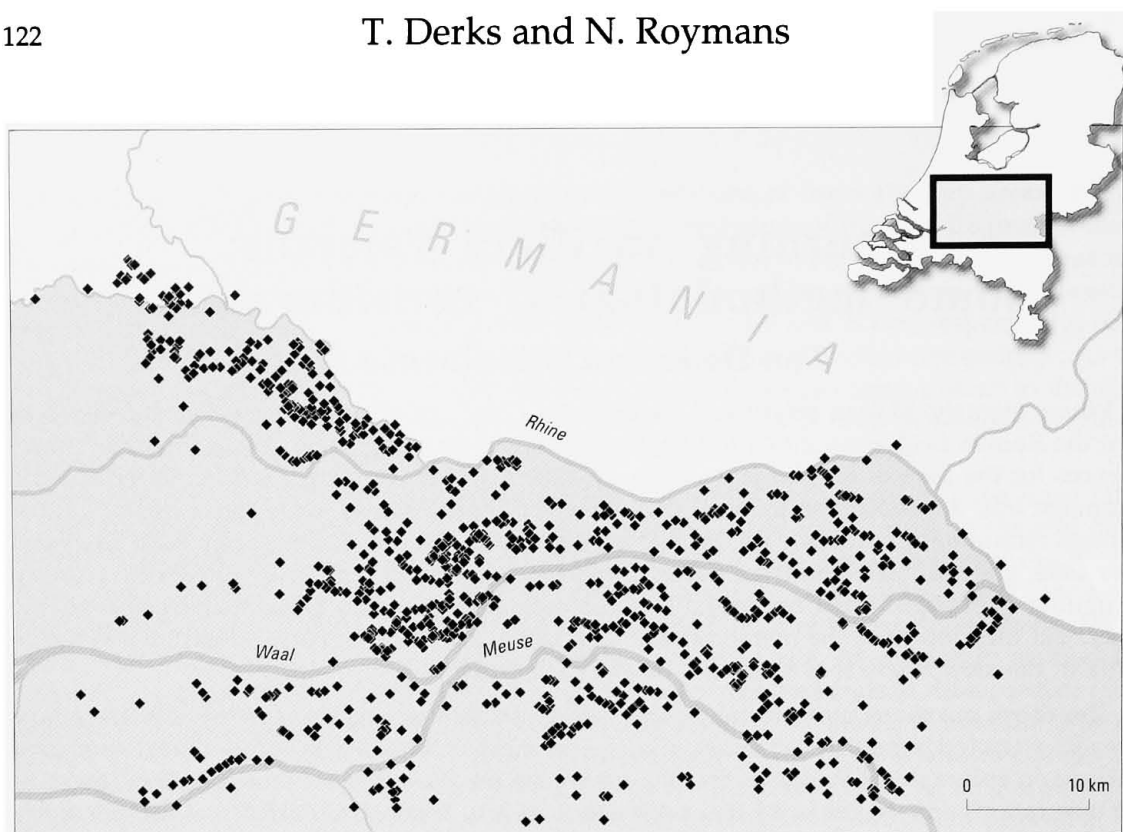


Fig. 1. Rural settlements in the area of the *civitas Batavorum* (data: I. Vossen; drawing: B. Brouwenstijn).

While we do not wish to deny the value of the epigraphical sources for questions of veteran settlement, the present paper intends to challenge the straightforward conclusions that have been drawn from them until recently. It attempts to do so by taking the Batavi of Lower Germany as a case-study. After presenting the epigraphical evidence for the presence of veterans in the province of Lower Germany, the discussion will focus on other categories of material culture that might be taken as an indication of veteran settlement. By confronting the epigraphical and archaeological classes of evidence, we try to elucidate the biases inherent in studies that have relied exclusively on the epigraphical record, and we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the scale and geography of veteran settlement in this particular part of the empire.

Batavians and the Roman army

The Batavians were a rather new ethnic group who occupied the Lower Rhine frontier zone in the Early Imperial era. They are the descendants of a fusion of native and immigrant groups that occurred, probably under Roman control, in the period between 50 and 15 B.C.⁶ The heart of their territory was the E half of the Rhine/Meuse delta, an area of barely 4200 km² (70 x 60 km). In demographic terms too the Batavians formed a relatively small community. Using systematic mapping, we can estimate the number of native settlements in the area of the *civitas Batavorum* at about 1250, and the size of the rural population there at c.30-40,000 (fig. 1).⁷

It has become increasingly clear from new historical and archaeological research that the Batavians occupied a special place within the empire thanks to the extraordinary scale on which they supplied auxiliary troops. No other population group within the empire was as intensively exploited for recruitment purposes. In the pre-Flavian period, probably as early as the Augustan period, 8 *cohortes* and 1 *ala* (each comprising 500 men) were levied among the

⁶ For the ethnogenesis of the Batavians, see Roymans 2004, esp. chapt. 5.

⁷ This calculation is based on the assumptions that each settlement consisted of 3-4 contemporaneous houses and that each house counted 8 inhabitants. If the inhabitants of the Batavian capital at Nijmegen are included, the total number has to be raised by c.3,000. For details, see Willems 1984, 234-37; Vossen 2003, esp. 427 and 435, Table 4.

Batavi. The imperial bodyguard too was made up for the most part of Batavians; it was dismissed by Galba, but is probably to be identified with the auxiliary cohort that Julius Civilis commanded during the Batavian revolt in A.D. 69.⁸ We may thus estimate the number of Batavians serving in the Roman army at about 5,000. In the post-Flavian era, their number is estimated a little higher — about 5,500 soldiers, now divided over 6 ‘national’ units, 1 quin-genary cohort, 4 cohorts of milliary strength, and 1 milliary *ala*.⁹ Naturally, the scale of this ethnic recruitment had far-reaching consequences for the organisation and development of the Batavian community. As early as the 1980s, on the basis of demographic calculations, W. Willems posited that almost every Batavian family had one son, sometimes even two, in the army.¹⁰ Although I. Vossen, N. Roymans and J. Van Rossum have recently nuanced this calculation,¹¹ Willems’ claim is still valid today. It is perhaps no coincidence that among the 68 epigraphically-recorded Batavians we encounter no less than 7 instances of two brothers serving as soldiers in the same unit.¹²

What did this large-scale recruitment of soldiers mean for the development of the Batavian region? Although Roman archaeology in the Netherlands has a long tradition of studying the links between the military and civilian domains,¹³ until recently attempts to substantiate in archaeological terms the presumed link between the two has met with little success.¹⁴ Particularly for the areas immediately behind the *limes*, excavations and fieldwork reveal a rural

8 Bellen 1981, 98.

9 Alföldy 1968, 13-14 and 45-48; Willems 1984, 229 f. and 235; Vossen 2003, 418-20, with n.25.

10 Willems 1984, 236.

11 Vossen 2003; Roymans 2004, chapt. 8.5, points out that in the pre-Flavian period some minor population groups from the coastal area (e.g., the Cananefates, Frisiavones and Marsaci) may have been attributed to the *civitas Batavorum* and were perhaps also to deliver men for the Batavian auxiliary units. Starting from calculations based on life expectancy tables, Van Rossum (2004, esp. 124 ff.) concluded that, with a population size of about 40,000, the recruits for the Batavian regiments cannot have been conscripted exclusively in Batavian territory. Van Driel-Murray (2003, esp. 212 with n.56) argued that, after the Batavian revolt, when former client groups of the Batavians, such as the Cananefates, were given their own units, and recruitment for the Batavian auxilia would have been restricted to ‘true’ Batavians, the pressure on the Batavian community must have increased.

12 Cf. the Appendix in Derks 2004, esp. Table A, 2-3; Table B, 11-12, 13-14, 51-52, 58-59, 61-62, and 65-66. Though in letters the Latin *frater* most likely is a general form of address (cf. *Tab. Vindol.* 310, with the editors’ comments on ll. 1-2; Birley 2002, 11, 106 ff.), in monumental stone inscriptions such a metaphorical meaning of the term is not very likely and can be ruled out whenever the *gentilicium* of the dead and the commemorator are identical; this is true for all our examples where both are given (B 51-52, 58-59, 61-62, and 65-66).

13 For instance, Bloemers 1978; Willems 1984; Groenman-Van Waateringe 1989.

14 A positive exception is the stimulating article “Ethnic soldiers: the experience of the Lower Rhine tribes” by C. van Driel-Murray (2003). Using ‘ethnic soldier theory’ developed in sociological studies (esp. Enloe 1980) of the military exploitation of ‘martial races’ in pre-modern colonial empires, Van Driel tries to re-interpret both the relationship of the Batavians with the Roman empire as well as the internal structure and development of Batavian society. While we agree with the paper’s central theses, that Batavian society as a martial race to a considerable extent was a creation of the Roman empire, and that large-scale recruitment must have had deep effects on all aspects of Batavian society, in our view the application of the model is taken too far, leading to forced conclusions. An example is the characterisation of Batavian agriculture as an “intensive horticultural regime” geared to family self-sufficiency with small-scale marketing of vegetables, eggs and cheese (206). This horticulture would have been carried out by women (“... Caesar and Tacitus are actually correct when they remark on the fact that German males are lazy and do no agricultural work”). There is, however, no archaeological nor archaeobotanical evidence for a special rôle of horticulture in the Batavian area. Here too, cereal cultivation (especially of barley and emmer wheat) by plough agriculture provided the basis of local food production. Furthermore, the author presents a rather one-sided picture of the rôle of animal husbandry among the Batavians whereby cattle raising is reduced to a “love-affair with manure collection” for the benefit of horticulture. While the evidence for the rôle of cattle as supplier of meat and milk is underestimated here, the important rôle of horse-breeding in the Batavian rural economy is completely omitted.

landscape dominated by small settlements, each with 3-5 traditional byre-houses (*Wohnstall-häuser*). While these houses differ somewhat from each other in length and architecture, typical are common features such as wattle-and-daub walls, thatched roofs, and a spatial arrangement whereby the living quarters and byre are united under a single roof. Roman-style villas are rare: fundamentally, the Rhine/Meuse delta was a non-villa landscape which in many ways appears to us as 'prehistoric' rather than Roman.¹⁵ Strikingly, not only the settlements but also the rural cemeteries were characterised by a continuation of pre-Roman traditions, rather than by the adoption of Roman ways of treating the dead. Typical are cemeteries with simple cremation burials beneath small *tumuli*, marked by rectangular or circular ditched enclosures,¹⁶ while Roman-style funerary monuments are very rare. Based on the excavation evidence, archaeologists would be inclined to characterise the Batavians as a rural society which had barely embraced Roman traditions and which was only marginally incorporated into the empire.

Of course, this picture is incorrect; written and epigraphic sources reveal a completely different state of affairs. But it is only in recent years that research into rural settlements has provided us with convincing archaeological evidence for this. Intensive use of the potential of metal detection has proved vital here. In recent years the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has compiled a comprehensive inventory of several categories of metal objects (coins, militaria, seal-boxes, signet rings) from excavations and from public and private collections. For the Batavian territory, the maps generated on the basis of this inventory reveal an astonishing wealth of small finds which enables us to paint a different picture of the Batavian society. The results are highly relevant for the issue of returning veterans. In the 1st c., given the massive recruitment of auxiliary troops for the Roman army, these would have been mainly cohort veterans, but from the end of the 1st c. onwards, with the spread of Roman citizenship among the Batavians, they would increasingly have included legionary veterans.¹⁷ There are two central questions: first, is there tangible evidence of veterans in the archaeological record, and, if so, what form does it take? second, what was the scale of veteran settlement?

Veteran settlement and epigraphy

Archaeological discussions about veteran settlement in Lower Germany have centered, until recently, almost entirely on epigraphic material.¹⁸ S. Demougin, for instance, recently concluded, on the basis of the distribution of inscriptions erected for or by veterans, that most of the soldiers who had been dismissed from the army of Lower Germany preferred to settle either near the gates of the forts and fortresses of their last army posting or in the urban centres of that area (fig. 2).¹⁹ Apart from the provincial capital at Cologne which, with 22 veteran

15 Roymans 1996, 72 ff.

16 For Early Imperial rural cemeteries in the area of the Batavians, cf. Haalebos 1990; Hiddink 2003.

17 Among the earliest evidence for Batavian legionary veterans are a funeral inscription (*CIL* XIII 7577) from Wiesbaden, erected for a veteran from *Legio XXII* based at Mainz, and a votive inscription (*AE* 1990, 740, with commentary in Derks 1998, 112 f., n.152) from the Hercules sanctuary at Empel, erected by a veteran from *Legio X* based at Nijmegen. Both date from the first quarter of the 2nd c.

18 Cf. Demougin 1999; Roxan 2000; Bridger, below in this issue.

19 Demougin 1999, esp. 372. The map of fig. 2 is based on the data gathered by Demougin but with the following changes and additions: military diplomas have been omitted (they are mapped separately in fig. 3), as have been the inscriptions *CIL* XIII 8849 (findspot unknown though, given the fact that the veteran was discharged from *Legio XXI*, a findspot in the vicinity of Xanten, Neuss or Bonn may be conjectured), *CIL* XIII 8746 (for which the relationship to a veteran is insufficiently established), and F 372, the deed of purchase from Tolsum whose findspot in the Dutch province of Friesland lies beyond the framework of this map. The odd inscription of a veteran from the *numeri* has been placed under those from the *auxilia*, while the inscriptions from Cologne-Deutz (*CIL* XIII 8492 and 8503) have been assigned here to Cologne. Not featuring in the tables by Demougin, but included in the present map, are a votive inscription (*AE* 1983, 723) from Born-Buchten by a veteran from *Legio VI Victrix* and a recently discovered epitaph from Houten for an auxiliary veteran of unknown cohort (Derks 2003). In addition,

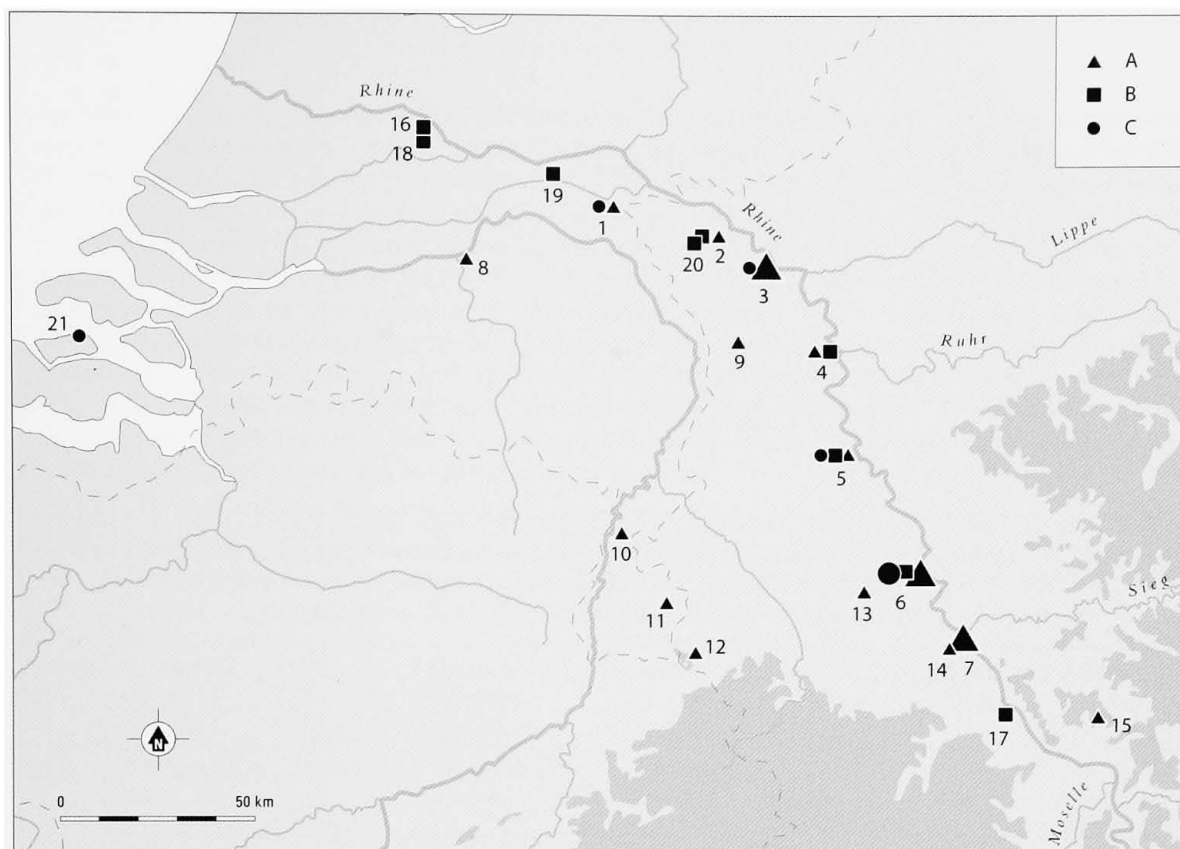


Fig. 2. Distribution of monumental inscriptions mentioning veterans (data after Demougin 1999, 373 ff. with additions and corrections; drawing B. Brouwenstjñ). Key: A - legionary veterans; B - auxiliary veterans; C - veterans of unknown type of unit (large symbols indicate 5 or more inscriptions). See also n.19.

1 - Nijmegen; 2 - *Burginatum*/Altkalkar; 3 - Xanten; 4 - *Asciburgium*/Moers-Asberg; 5 - *Novaesium*/Neuss; 6 - *CCAA*/Cologne; 7 - *Bonna*/Bonn; 8 - Empel; 9 - Geldern-Pont; 10 - Born-Buchten; 11 - Heerlen; 12 - *Aquae*/Aachen; 13 - Kierdorf; 14 - Bonn-Lessenich; 15 - Urbach; 16 - Vechten; 17 - Remagen; 18 - Houten; 19 - Dodewaard; 20 - Neuluisendorf; 21 - Colijnsplaat.

inscriptions out of a total of 73, undoubtedly exercised a special attraction among soldiers of all regiments of Lower Germany's army, it is above all the long-lived legionary camps at Xanten and Bonn that are well represented. Remarkably, only 11 of the inscriptions listed by Demougin were found in the countryside (fig. 2, nos. 8-15 and 18-20), most being related to soldiers who had been dismissed from the legions. One would be inclined to conclude that very few veterans settled in the countryside, and that those that did so mainly had served in the army's core units, the legions. We should bear in mind, however, that the distribution of monumental veteran inscriptions should be seen as an indicator of the spread of epigraphic culture in general, rather than as a reliable measure of the true extent of veteran settlement in the countryside; or, to put it differently, the epigraphic evidence is strongly biased towards military and urban centres.²⁰ In view of the fact that, for most of the period under consideration, the garrison

the following corrections are to be made: the findspot of the inscription for Bititralis, veteran from the *ala I Thracum* (CIL XIII 8818), is not *Traiectum*, as both Demougin and Roxan (2000) reported, but Vechten, and that of CIL XIII 8601 is not *Vetera*, but Geldern-Pont. The epitaph (CIL XIII 8652) for a veteran of *Legio XXII*, who is said to have been a *civis Traianensis*, does not originate from the army camp at *Vetera*, but from a cemetery near *Colonia Vlpia Traiana*; his citizenship in the new colony points to a date after 98. Similarly, the inscriptions which Demougin gathered under the heading *Noviomagus* contain examples from the *castra* on the Hunerberg and from the urban center at the *oppidum Batavorum* and its successor *Ulpia Noviomagus*. For cartographic reasons, these distinctions could not be maintained in the map. Finally, the reference to the inscription from Empel should be AE 1990, 740.

20 Cf. Woolf 1996; Derks 1998, 81 ff., with fig. 3.2.

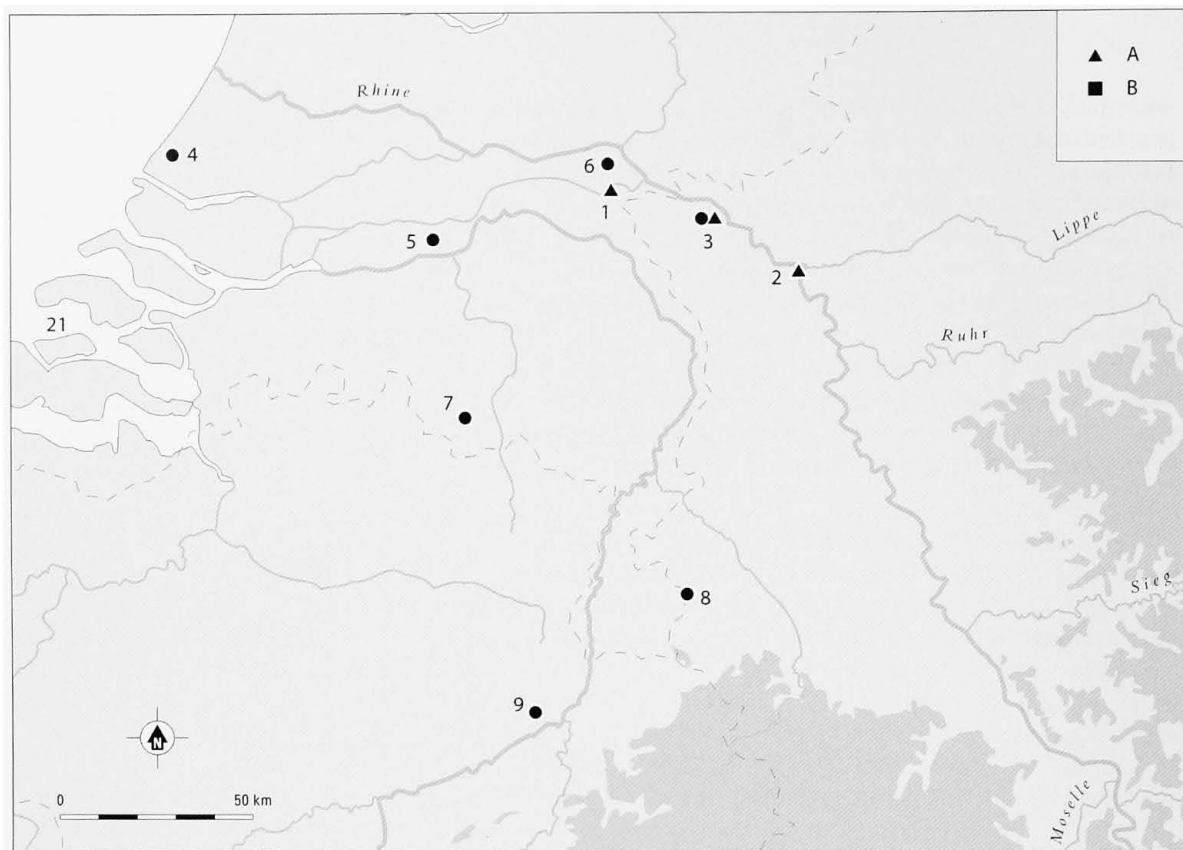


Fig 3. Distribution of Roman military diplomas according to find context. Key: A urban center or military settlement; B rural settlement (drawing: B. Brouwenstýn).

1 - Nijmegen (-West); 2 - Xanten-CVT; 3 - Kalkar; 4 - Poeldijk; 5 - Delwijnen; 6 - Elst; 7 - Hoogeloon; 8 - Rimburg; 9 - Flémalle.

of the army of Lower Germany counted about as many auxiliaries as legionaries,²¹ a strong negative bias can also be assumed towards veterans from the *auxilia*.

A picture that is slightly better balanced emerges if we take into account military diplomas. Apart from the soldiers who served in the imperial guard and the urban and praetorian cohorts at Rome, or in the fleets based at Misenum and Ravenna, diplomas were issued especially to soldiers from the *auxilia* who had completed their period of service in one of the provincial armies. Even though, with 9 or 10 examples, the number of Roman military diplomas handed out to former auxiliaries from Lower Germany is surprisingly small²² (unlike for monumental inscriptions), the rural area is well represented among the find-sites for these diplomas (fig. 3):²³ apart from one or two from *Noviomagus*-Nijmegen,²⁴ one from the colony of Xanten, and one from the camp of *Burghinatum*-Alt-Kalkar, the remaining 6 are from the countryside. We only know of one that was found in a Roman villa (Hoogeloon), while three fragments originate from simple rural settlements.

These diplomas had evidently been brought by veterans returning home after their honourable discharge. For a clear understanding of the phenomenon, however, we cannot confine

21 Only in the Flavian-Trajanic period was the number of auxiliaries clearly outweighed by legionaries. Cf. Alföldy 1968, 136 ff, esp. 151 and 161; Kunow in Horn 1987, 54-56; cf. also Bridger, below in this issue.

22 Kellner 1986, 244; Haalebos 2000, 33.

23 Although, as documents from the Roman army, military diplomas may be considered products of the same epigraphic culture as the monumental private inscriptions, their occurrence in the countryside can be explained by the fact that they were portable.

24 We are dealing with two fragments (one now lost) which may have belonged to the same diploma.

ourselves to the simple mapping of the findspots, but need to distinguish between documents issued for troopers of the army of Lower Germany, and ones issued for soldiers who had served in other provincial armies.²⁵ In addition, we must consider whether those veterans who decided to settle in the province of their last post had been recruited locally or from other provinces. From the 18 diplomas issued for men from the army of Lower Germany (Table 1, nos. 1-5; Table 2) only 5 stayed in the province. The three men for whom we have any background information were all locally recruited: apart from a Batavian and a Cananefatian horseman, there is a soldier who, to judge by his name, must stem from this part of the empire. In these cases, it will have been ethnic and or kinship ties, rather than loyalty to the provincial army, that motivated these men not to leave the province.²⁶ The evidence for veterans from other provinces who came to settle here is too scanty to produce any key as to their roots, and we may assume that they or their wives were native to the area.

TABLE 1. ROMAN MILITARY DIPLOMAS FOUND IN THE PROVINCE OF LOWER GERMANY²⁷

1-5: Diplomas issued for men who had served in the army of the province and after discharge had stayed here;
6-10: Diplomas issued for men who had served in the army of other provinces and after discharge had come to settle in Lower Germany, probably because this was their home country (cf. map, fig. 3).

	Reference	date	findspot	issued	recipient	ethnicon	unit
1	RMD 216	20 Feb. 98	Elst (NL)	Ger. Inf.	[---] Gaveri f.	Batavs	
2	CIL XVI 59	107/113 ²⁸	Kalkar (D)	Ger. Inf.		-	
3	CIL XVI 65	98/117?	Nijmegen (NL)	Ger. Inf.	-	-	-
4	RMD 52	158	Xanten - CVT	Ger. Inf.	Ahucco Leub[asni? f.]		Cohors I Pannoniorum et Delmatarum eq.
5	RMD 120	161/167	Poeldijk	Ger. Inf.	[---] Amandi f.	Cananefas	Ala I Noricorum c.R.
6	CIL XVI 43 = ILB 137	98	Flémalle (B)	Britannia			
7	RMD III 151	ante 114	Delwijnen (NL)	Britannia			
8	unpublished	ante 129	Hoogeloon (NL)	Britannia?			
9	unpublished; cf. Haalebos 2000, n.11	c.130/134 (info. from P. Holder)	Rimburg (NL)	Pannonia inf.			
10	RMD V 450	154/203?	Nijmegen/Ulpia Noviomagus (NL)	Britannia			

Although, in contrast to the monumental inscriptions, findspots of military diplomas reveal that auxiliary veterans did settle not just in towns and military settlements but in the countryside, on the basis of the few available documents we are unable to arrive at reliable conclusions about the extent to which this occurred. First, soldiers already in possession of Roman citizenship before entering military service (i.e., all legionaries and, from the end of the 1st c. onwards, increasing numbers of auxiliary soldiers too) are not represented in the documents. Second, it is still a matter of dispute whether all peregrine auxiliary soldiers acquired such a document.²⁹ Even under ideal circumstances (i.e. if all military diplomas at one time circulating in Lower Germany had survived) we would still be groping in the dark on this point.

25 As do all students of military diplomas. This explains why the fragments from Hoogeloon and Delwijnen are not mentioned in the study by Roxan (2000): they were brought to Lower Germany by soldiers who had served in the army of *Britannia*, and after discharge had returned home. Demougin included only those military diplomas that contain some kind of information on the recipient (RMD 120 from Poeldijk; RMD 52 from Xanten).

26 Cf. Roxan 1997. Conversely, as their *origo* or onomastics tell, those auxiliary soldiers that left the province (Table 2) were evidently foreign to the area.

27 There is some ambiguity concerning the administrative allocation of the Tungri; here they have been attributed to the province of Lower Germany. Cf. Raepsaet-Charlier 1995, citing older literature.

28 Cf. Eck and Pangerl, *ZPE* 143 (2003) 211 ff., no. 2, n.56, who present the possibility that the new find published by them and dating to A.D. 95 or 96 might be a copy of the same *constitutio* as this diploma.

TABLE 2. ROMAN MILITARY DIPLOMAS ISSUED FOR MEN WHO HAD SERVED IN THE ARMY OF LOWER GERMANY³⁰ AND AFTER DISCHARGE HAD LEFT THE RHINE PROVINCE TO SETTLE ELSEWHERE IN THE EMPIRE, PROBABLY IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY.

	<i>Reference</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>findspot</i>		<i>recipient</i>	<i>ethnicon</i>	<i>unit</i>
1	CIL XVI 20	21 May 74	Sikator (H)	Pan. Sup.	Veturius Teutomi f.	<i>Pannonius</i>	Ala Scubulorum
2	RGZM 2	76	'untere Donau'	-	-	-	-
3	CIL XVI 23 ³¹	15 April 78	Wiesbaden (D)	Ger S	Tertius Marci f.	<i>Trevir</i>	Ala Moesica
4	CIL XVI 158	26/28 Jan, 80	Kamensko (BG)	Moes. Inf.	Durises Bithi f.	<i>Thrax</i>	Cohors IIII Thracum
5	RGZM 4	14-30 Jan, 80	'unterer Donaauraum'				
6	ZPE 143, 205 ff., no. 1	81/84	'unbekannt'	-	-	-	
7	ZPE 143, 205 ff., no. 2	95/96	'unbekannt'	-	-	-	-
8	RGZM 9	13 March 101	'wahrscheinlich von der unteren Donau'			<i>Thrax</i>	Cohors I c.R.
9	RMD 239	20 Aug. 127	Glava (BG)	Moes. Inf.	[---sa] Natusis f.	<i>Dacus</i> ³²	Cohors IIII Thracum pf
10	RGZM 24	[20 Aug.] 127	'Balkan'	-	Daubasgi [f.]	-	-
11	Holder 2003, 125	138/161					
12	RMD V 408	(5 Sept.) 152	'östlicher Balkanraum'		Githiossis D[--- f.]		Cohors XV voluntariorum
13	RGZM 35; RMD V p. 702 f., n. 28	(5 Sept.) 152	'wohl von der unteren Donau'				

Veteran settlement and material culture

If the scale of veteran settlement proves difficult to assess from the epigraphical evidence alone, the inventory of some other categories of metal objects can go a long way toward providing an answer. Here we wish to explore methodologically the potential of two types of evidence that so far have barely been exploited for the issue at stake: seal-boxes, and Roman military equipment and horse gear.

The discovery of a few bronze seal-boxes during excavations at the rural settlement of Tiel-'Passewaaij' prompted us to draw up an inventory of such objects that turned out to give unexpected results. The prevailing view was that these boxes were primarily used for sealing private letters written on wax tablets. Instead, we argued that the distribution of the seal-boxes allows us to say something about the spread of literacy and, indirectly, something about the spread of knowledge of the Latin language.³³ Until recently, seal-boxes were primarily known from army camps. However, from our inventory it emerged that these metal objects also regularly occur in simple rural settlements containing only byre-houses (fig. 4).³⁴ If the seal-boxes originally belonged to letters kept in these houses (and fragments of wax tablets have

29 Compare Kellner 1986 and Pferdehirt 2002 with Eck 2003, 71 f.

30 Military diplomas issued before *Germania* was split into two provinces in c.A.D. 84 have been included.

31 CIL XVI 23 concerns units *quae sunt in Germania*, so it clearly refers to the complete military district before this was transformed into the two German provinces; as the diploma RGZM 9 from A.D. 101 now proves, the *ala Moesica* formed part of the army of Lower Germany.

32 For inhabitants of Moesia Inferior being designated as *Daci*, cf. Nollé 1997, 273 f.

33 Derks and Roymans 2002.

34 The distribution map has been updated with rural settlements which have produced examples since 2002 (see the numbers on the map and the legend). Some of these finds were mentioned in the addendum to Derks and Roymans 2002, 127, but knowledge of them came too late to include them in the diagrams, tables and maps of that article. In addition, new finds have been recorded from sites known before: excavations of the rural settlements at Tiel-'Passewaaij' have produced a seventh example, a second example has been reported for Houten-Veerwagenweg, and two new finds (now in a private collection)

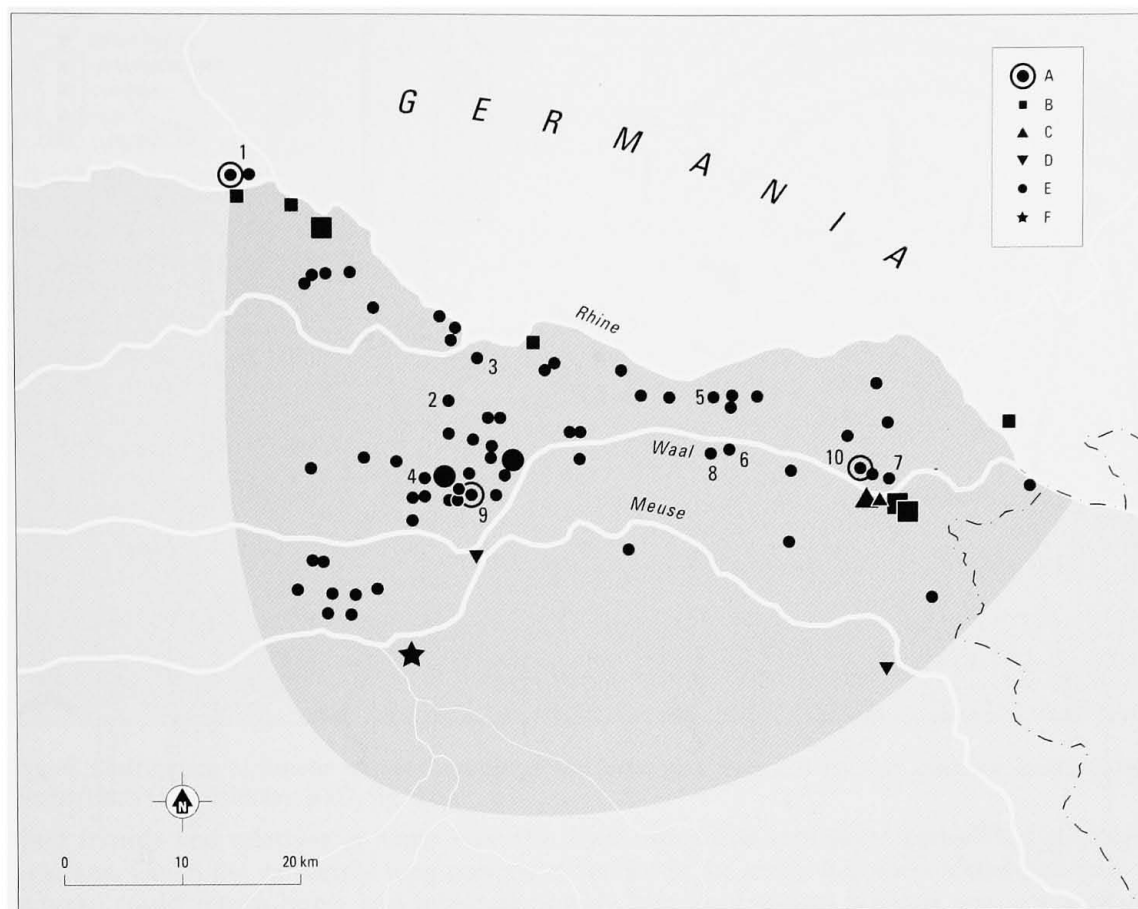


Fig. 4. Distribution of wooden wax tablets from rural settlements (A) and copper alloy seal-boxes in the *civitas Batavorum*, according to find context (after Derks and Roymans 2002, fig. 7.6, with additions). Key: B - Roman army camp including *canabae* and military *vici*; C - *civitas* capital (*oppidum Batavorum* and *Ulpia Noviomagus*); D - rural centres (*vici*); E - rural settlements; F - sanctuaries (large symbol indicates 5 or more seal-boxes) (drawing: B. Brouwenstyn).

1 - Utrecht-‘Hoge Weide’; 2 - Asch-‘Hofkampse Steeg’; 3 - Rijswijk-‘Essenbos’; 4 - Est-‘Bovenblok’; 5 - Randwijk-‘De Stern’; 6 - Deest; 7 - Lent-‘Smitjesland’; 8 - Afferden; 9 - Ophemert-‘De Steendert’; 10 - Oosterhout-‘Van Boetzelaerstraat’.

indeed been found in some of these settlements: fig. 4), we can interpret these finds as archaeological evidence of private correspondence between Batavian soldiers in distant parts of the empire and their families back home. Also significant are the results concerning writing tablets from the fort of Vindolanda on the British frontier, where a Batavian unit was stationed in c.A.D. 100.³⁵ The fact that the fragments of text were written in many different hands is evidence that a significant number of soldiers was able to read and write Latin. The content of some texts even suggests communication between soldiers and their homeland.³⁶

If the seal-boxes may be interpreted as evidence for correspondence in Latin between soldiers and their relatives or friends, the key question is who could read the messages. It is here that we assume a key rôle for returned veterans. As men who had lived in both worlds, they may have functioned as mediators between the soldiers and the illiterate or non-Latin-speaking elements of the population.³⁷ Such long-distance communication between active soldiers and

are known from the pre-Flavian army camp on the ‘Kops Plateau’ at Nijmegen. As for the chronology of seal-boxes, see now the discussion of the earliest, semi-oval examples from the Late Republican and Early Augustan periods in Brouquier-Reddé and Deyber 2001, 306 f., and Luik 2002, 66 f.

35 Bowman and Thomas 1994; Birley 2002.

36 Potential examples are *Tab. Vindol.* 255, 310, and 346.

37 Although the penetration of a writing culture seems intense, in our 2002 paper we may have overestimated the process of Latinisation. One cannot rule out the possibility that, even in the 3rd c. there

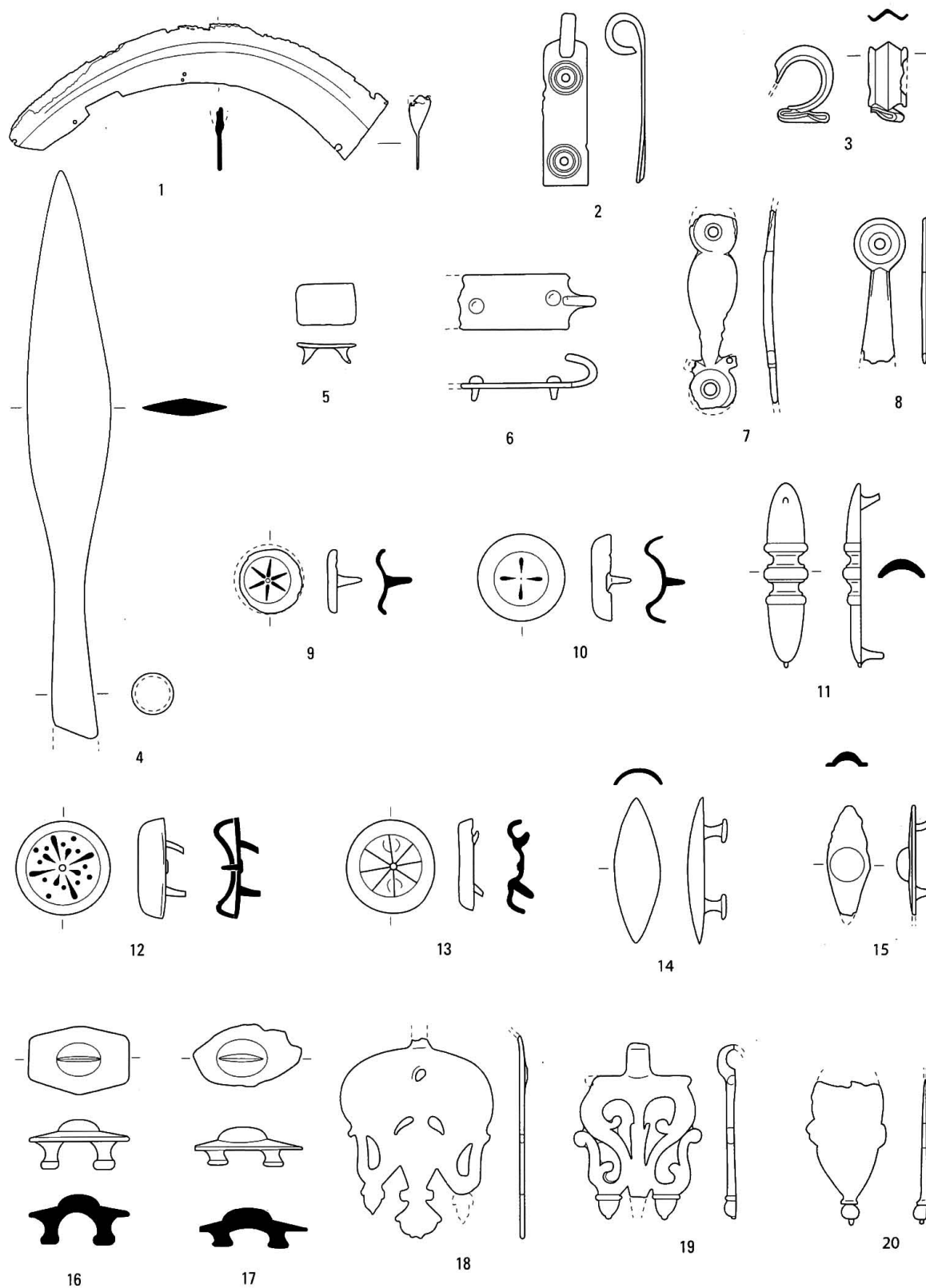


Fig. 5. Fragments of Roman military equipment (1-6) and horse gear (7-20) from the rural settlement at Tiel-Passewaaij (excavations: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; drawings: J. Nicolay).

remained elements with no command of Latin at all, who continued to speak their local language. Cf. now the stimulating paper by Eck 2004.

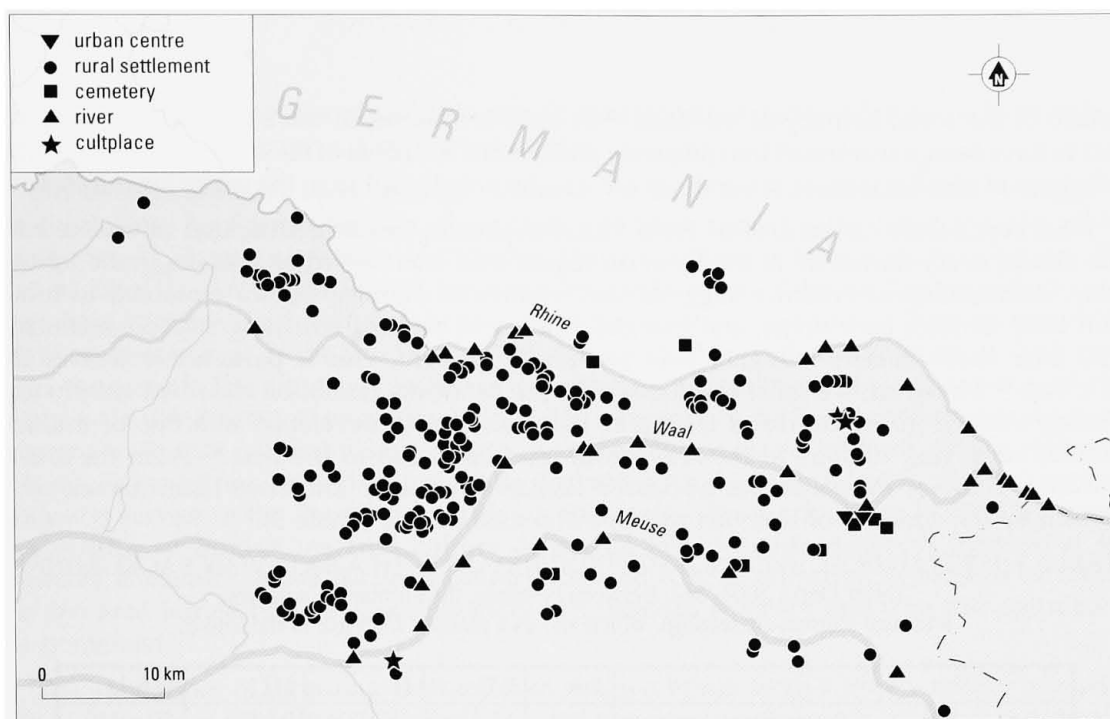


Fig. 6. Distribution of Roman military equipment and horse gear from non-military contexts in the central Netherlands (after Nicolay 2007, fig. 3.6).

their friends and relatives at home may also have influenced settlement patterns of auxiliary veterans. Given the extremely long periods of service in the army, it is hard to imagine how a veteran could return home and integrate quickly into local society without any intermittent contact. Since long periods of home leave which would enable soldiers to travel across provincial boundaries and be with their kin in person are unattested, letters may well have constituted the main means to stay in contact with loved ones.³⁸

No less surprising are the findings of J. Nicolay's recent doctoral thesis on the use and significance of weaponry and horse gear from civilian contexts in the *civitas Batavorum*.³⁹ His inventory shows that fragments of these *militaria* occur on almost every settlement from the 1st to the 3rd c. While the objects are usually discovered by metal-detecting on rural settlements, excavations show that they are regularly found in the immediate vicinity of byre-houses, where presumably they were once kept. Among the finds from the settlement of Tiel-*Passewaaij* are a fragmentary sheath-mount from a *gladius*, a tie-loop of *lorica segmentata*, a tinned helmet crest, and a tinned rectangular strap-mount of the apron, as well as several dozen fragments of horse gear (fig. 5). Nicolay's interpretation is that the military items were brought back by returning veterans. On their discharge, soldiers could sell all or part of their equipment back to the army, offer it up in a cult place of Hercules, or keep it at home as personal memorabilia. In the latter instance, a considerable quantity of *militaria* ended up eventually as settlement debris. If Nicolay's explanation is correct, the *militaria* may give us a more representative picture of the number of returning veterans, which proves to be far higher than expected (cf. fig. 6), confirming the notion of a very intensive recruitment that affected almost all Batavian families.

We now know that *militaria* belonging to discharged soldiers frequently turn up in rural settlements in the Batavian region (fig. 6). However, there is no tradition here of depositing parts of military equipment in graves: *militaria* very rarely occur in grave contexts. On this point, the burial ritual and, more particularly, the grave inventories do not convey a reliable

38 See also Alston 1999, 179 ff., and Mitthof 2000, esp. 384, who points to Egyptian documentary evidence for serving soldiers taking an active interest in the running of family farms as well as family affairs.

39 Nicolay 2007.

picture of the social identity of the dead.⁴⁰ In rural cemeteries of the Batavians the dead appear to have been transformed into relatively anonymous members of the community. Even basic indicators of identity such as sex and age are usually not alluded to in the grave inventories.

What conclusions can be drawn? From historical sources we can deduce that sons were born into almost every farmstead in the Batavian region who later served as soldiers in the Roman army. Archaeological evidence suggests that soldiers in military service remained in touch with their families back home, and that the number of soldiers returning to their homeland after their *missio honesta* is higher than previously thought. This is particularly true of the 1st c. A.D.⁴¹ Moreover, we must emphasise that the Batavians cannot be classified simply as a farming society: in the course of the 1st c., Batavian society developed into one of military families supplying soldiers to the army from one generation to the next.⁴² From the 2nd c. onwards, many of these families possessed Roman citizenship and bore Latin names, as is attested by the epitaphs of Batavian soldiers who died abroad (Table 3).

TABLE 3. EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH A BATAVIAN BACKGROUND
(after Derks 2004, 56). Between brackets: the number of soldiers
who had Roman citizenship, which shows a marked increase in the 2nd c.

	I A	I B	II	III	totals
<i>natione Batavus</i>	1 (0)	11 (1)	8 (7)	9 (9)	29 (17)
<i>domo Batavus</i>		3 (0)			3 (0)
<i>Batavus</i>		3 (0)	10 (5)		13 (5)
<i>natione Batavus Ulpia Noviomago</i>			3 (3)		3 (3)
<i>Ulpia Noviomagi Batavus</i>			1 (1)		1 (1)
<i>Ulpia Noviomagi Batavorum</i>			1 (1)		1 (1)
<i>Ulpia Noviomago</i>			6 (6)	1 (1)	7 (7)
<i>Noviomago</i>				3 (3)	3 (3)
<i>civis Batavus</i>				2 (2 ?)	2 (2)
totals	1 (0)	17 (1)	29 (23)	15 (15)	62 (39)

The inventory has uncovered an ambivalent picture of the Batavians. On the one hand, we are confronted with the customary, somewhat prehistoric appearance of most settlements with their byre-houses; on the other, the people who occupied these byre-houses had a surprisingly close relationship with the Roman world, spoke Latin, and often possessed Roman citizenship. It seems to have been a normal pattern that soldiers, after 25 years in the army, inhabited houses which, in Roman eyes, appeared 'Germanic' and 'barbarian'. (It is hardly conceivable that foreign, self-respecting Roman citizens would have settled in native byre-houses in the Batavian countryside.) How should we understand these apparent contradictions? The answer probably lies in key concepts like identity, self-image and, in the words of the British anthropologist Nadia Lovell, a "sense of locality and belonging".⁴³ Despite their lengthy separation from their region of birth, many veterans retained a close affinity with their homeland and its way of life. The overall picture is one of an ethnically fairly-homogenous rural population. The close association of this type of house with the stabling of animals appeals to well-known Germanic clichés, which many would have been aware of. For the average Batavian veteran,

40 *Contra* Haffner 1989.

41 Nicolay 2007 shows that the occurrence of Roman military equipment and horse gear in rural settlements culminates in the 1st c. A.D.

42 For the Batavians, the epigraphical evidence shows one family from which both father and son served in the army: Alföldy and Lörincz 2003; Derks 2004, Appendix, nos. B 25-26. For the concept of "military families", see Roymans 2004, 255-56.

43 Lovell 1998.

who had passed a large part of his life in simple and uncomfortable wooden barracks in forts at the periphery of the empire, that mattered little.

The issue might have been different, however, for Batavian commanders who belonged to the local élite. As Roman knights, these men will have earned some respect in the wider Roman world. It seems questionable whether they too settled in traditional byre-houses. We picture them as the inhabitants of the occasional villa in the Batavian countryside or of a town-house in the tribal capital at Nijmegen; perhaps we glimpse one of them in one of the relatively rich burials of the late 1st c. B.C. discovered within walled *Grabgarten* of the town's main cemetery.⁴⁴ The grave in question was marked by a monumental funeral tower (unfortunately, only tiny fragments have been found). The inventory of the burial contained many items referring to Roman cultural practices, such as writing (silver-plated ink well, several *styli*, and knives), Roman drinking and eating habits (including hand-washing), bath culture (*strigiles*), alongside service in the Roman army (the silvered *umbo*, shield-grip, lance heads). The range and wealth of Roman material culture displayed here is quite different from what we normally encounter in the Batavian countryside, and it is an attractive hypothesis to regard the deceased buried here as the commander of a Batavian auxiliary unit who had returned to his homeland.

The importance of returning veterans in this region brings us to a closely related topic: the rôle of veterans as mediators of Roman ideas and practices to native populations. It is generally recognized that Roman authorities played an active rôle in the 'Romanisation' of provincial groups, as did native élites who were the first to adopt Roman ideas and practices. The Batavian case, however, is a special one of transcultural mediation, with veterans having a key rôle. This group will have developed its own specific interpretation of Roman culture and mediated that to different social groups. They may have acted as interpreters, translators, middlemen, agents, brokers, messengers, and commissioners in a wide range of social contexts. It is the mediating rôle played by these veterans that may explain the particular trajectory of 'Romanisation' that is so typical of the Batavian countryside. Here also lies a challenge for future research, to develop this model of the interweaving of the military and civilian spheres of Batavian society. What, in the end, was the contribution of the army to the integration of the Batavian polity into the empire? Large numbers received Roman citizenship through service in the army, many Batavians spoke and wrote Latin, but these forms of 'Romanisation' were motivated by practical considerations, rather than by aspirations of participation in a shared Roman world culture.

In the introduction, we noted that the epigraphical evidence of military diplomas points to considerable regional variations in returning frequencies among auxiliary veterans. While discharged Batavian auxiliaries are certainly under-represented in the epigraphical material, the archaeological evidence of seal-boxes and military equipment shows beyond doubt that here returning figures are high and, we imagine, considerably higher than among other population groups who had been targeted for ethnic soldiery for the *auxilia*. What factors may have driven so many former soldiers to return home? Since the classical authors and inscriptions remain silent on this point, we can only speculate. One reason may be the relatively long-lasting tradition of recruitment along ethnic lines and thus the continuing existence of ethnically homogeneous units. It has often been assumed that while, for most auxiliary regiments, from the early Flavian period onwards recruitment from the nearest available source was general practice, for units with special skills, such as the Batavians or Syrian archers, ethnic soldiering continued to be the rule.⁴⁵ As a result, the 'national' Batavian identity as a folk of professional soldiers may have continued to exist. That in turn might have prompted sons to follow fathers into the army.

44 Koster 1993.

45 Haynes 2001, 66.

At the beginning of the 2nd c. this tradition seems to have come to an end.⁴⁶ The relatively low pay in the *auxilia*, the granting of municipal rights, and the increasing spread of Roman citizenship, which enabled potential recruits to join the better-paid legions, in tandem with better prospects for other professional careers, may have weakened the attraction of service in 'national' units and may have forced the military authorities to start treating the Batavian *auxilia* like all others. Nevertheless, following the peak in the 1st c., Batavian lands continued to supply large numbers of men for the army until well into the 3rd c., a practice well demonstrated both by the epigraphical sources and by the archaeological evidence discussed above.

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46 Cf. Haynes 2001, 69 (with n.24), and now especially Van Rossum 2004, who, against Alföldy, Demougin and others, argues (convincingly) for a break in the ethnic recruitment practice for the Batavian units at this point in time.

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